

The Benefits of the New Testament.

BEING THE
SUBSTANCE
OF A
DISCOURSE

Delivered in L O N D O N,

In the YEAR 1745.

By J O H N C E N N I C K.

We have boldness to come into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. Heb. x. 19.

He is the Mediator of the New Testament, and of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. Heb. viii. 6. ix. 15.

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The Benefits of the New Testament.

H E B. xii. 22, 23, 24.

Ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly of the church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.

WHEN the author of this epistle had said much of the law, and the heavy dispensation of Moses, and shewed how it made nothing perfect, nor was remission of sins to be expected under that covenant, but all was calculated and imposed on the children of Israel for a time, till the Saviour should come and establish a better testament, and founded upon better promises, and had not only set forth the unprofitableness of it, in that it could not purge the conscience, nor justify

such as served under it, but had also observed how the awful manner in which it was delivered to the church in the wilderness, was with thunders and lightnings, with blackness, darkness, and a tempest, also with the sound of a trumpet, sounding louder and louder, and with a voice out of the tempest, and with an earthquake, and a strict charge that no soul might approach to the mountain, from whence it was delivered, and whereon the Lord descended with twenty thousand angels, and even if a beast should touch the mountain it must be stoned, or thrust thro' with a dart, and which so affected the meek servant of God, Moses, that he quaked exceedingly and was afraid; he then adds, but ye are not come to such a mountain, ye are not called to hear the fiery law, nor summoned to appear before God in so terrible majesty, but he says, "Ye are come to the mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, &c." he shews thro' the whole, what a happy difference there is between the two dispensations, that the believers in Christ, and such as hear the gospel, are now brought into the nearest fellowship with the saints and family of God, and made to be near of kin to the spirits of just men, and have the glorious privileges of being written in heaven, and made free citizens of the new Jerusalem, and reckoned with the first-born sons and daughters of God, together with the enjoyment of an acquaintance with the Mediator and his Father; and all this he mentions as the present benefits of faith, and to which all come on their belief in Christ.

All the blessings rehearsed in this part of the scripture have by some been thought such as pertained to the life to come, and possessed only in heaven when our christian race is ended; but whoso considers
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the apostle's manner of writing, compared with other parts of the gospel, will easily see he speaks of things to which now the children of God come and which are the real privileges of every believer, and his part of the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

Few, who lived from the time of Moses to Christ, enjoyed this grace, or ventured to enter in behind the vail, but now the vail is rent, a way is laid open into the inner courts, and a high way prepared into the holy place, and into the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus; so that now the winter and storms are gone, and the shadows fled away, and nothing is heard but the voice of the Beloved, inviting sinners into his house, and calling souls to come to the feast of fat things, which he has prepared before all people, and to enjoy all the mercies and favours purchased by his death, which is the commonwealth of Israel.

Believers are now no more kept at a distance from God, no longer bound to be all their life-time in bondage, thro' the fear of death, no longer obliged to walk in darkness, or kept in pain, through the thunders and curses of the law, and the pursuing of the avenger of blood, but may see their interest clear in the salvation, may approach and speak with their Lord as a man speaks with his friend, may experience the power of the blood of sprinkling, and each may know that he is a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. It is of this the text treats, and must be read in the church, as a part of the will and testament of Jesus, in which is specified the rights of his people, and the liberties and freedoms unto which he has broke a way for them, by his flesh, and by death put his will in force, so that now all that is mention-
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ed in this place, are the common rights of every believer in the world, and of which I shall treat freely.

Ye are come to the mount Sion : now the mount Sion was the spot on which the temple stood, and was the shadow of that in the upper world, and where the true temple is. To this we who believe come, and are founded upon this rock, and enter the gates of his temple, when we get into the wounds of our Saviour. He himself is the temple, even the Lord God, and the Lamb, and his nail-prints and pierced side, are the everlasting doors by which the true worshippers enter, and by this door, by this new and living way, whoever enters in shall be saved. We are henceforward reckoned inhabitants of the Rock, children of Zion, and such as have a right to follow the Lamb there, or whithersoever he goeth ; and tho' we are not yet arrived in person among the virgins, who are actually there, nor have leave to quit the world below, and lay down our staves, and put off our sandals, and dwell there intirely, and be seen here no more, yet are we there in spirit, and belong certainly thereto. We have, as it were, taken up our freedom, and are Christ's freemen ; and as St. Paul says, citizens with the saints and with the household of God, and no more strangers and foreigners there. Ye are come to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. This city John says, is the church, and shall come down with the Lamb in the last day, like a bride adorned and ready for the bridegroom. Among this number we are admitted, and are become living stones in this building ; and tho' we are not yet removed, and put into our right place, to go no more out, yet are we built upon Jesus, the head corner-stone, and a part of the house of God. We belong to the Jerusalem above,

as much as if we were there, nor can that church be perfect and compleat, till we are with them in body and soul. This heavenly Jerusalem, has many of her living stones not yet gathered out of the earth, many of her members are still in the world, and are grounded and fixed upon her Rock, the Rock of ages, and become one with him; so that we are numbered with the stones of this city in the eyes of our Saviour, and we know it, and the living God whose tabernacle is with men, dwells in us, and makes us his habitation and holy temple.

We are come also to an innumerable company of angels. When Jacob went out, God's hosts, his Mahanaim, went out with him, and when Elisha was on the mountain with his servant, and persecuted by the king's army, a multitude of angels were their guards, the whole hill was filled with chariots of fire, and horses of fire. To this day the heavenly hosts minister to the heirs of salvation, and encamp round about us day and night, an innumerable company attend the church militant, and no army of angels, no legion of seraphims do think it beneath them to wait round about our beds, or watch our way, since they have seen how dear we are in the eyes of their Maker. They saw the tears he shed, the streams of blood he spilt for us; they saw his griefs, his agonies, and were the eye-witnesses of all his sufferings on our account. They heard his intercession, his strong cries and tears in our behalf, and must count it a favour and honour to nurse or minister to souls bought so dearly, and loved with so great a love. If they were allowed to appear visibly to us, and to converse with us, their salutation would be daily like Gabriel's to the virgin, hail! ye highly favoured! for they know how highly esteemed we are by the Son of God our Saviour.

viour. But though so many of these ministers are with us constantly, it is good that we do not speak with them and see them, since it would be easy for us to put them in the stead of our Saviour, and be less eager to enjoy himself. He speaks with us, and is always near us, and can manifest his love, and make it surer to us, than if an angel told us of it. An angel could only speak to the ear, but he to the heart, and is better to us than all the angels in heaven; but yet a time shall come when the danger of idolatry shall be over, and then we shall see the innumerable company who are now our attendants. They shall one day carry us to Abraham's bosom, and sing us into our Father's house. They shall soon see us upon the throne with our Husband, and be our fellows for evermore, and the virgins that shall bear us company.

We are come to the general assembly, and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven. That is to say to the one fold, to the one church of God, to the elect and bride of Jesus, to the catholic or general assembly of the faithful, we are added to the goodly company of the prophets, to the noble army of martyrs, and in the family with the apostles of the Lamb, and all his disciples and friends gathered out of all nations and lands, and which are properly his first-born; that is, his heirs, such as have his Father for their Father, and his God for their God, and whom he will not be ashamed to call brethren. In the last day, in the harvest, when the angel shall preach the everlasting gospel to all that dwell upon the earth, and when a nation shall be born at once, and whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved; then shall these who have believed in Christ now, and are his first fruits in the earth, have the honour

honour to be the first-born among many brethren. As in the days of the law there was the feast of the first fruits, when all the first ripe grapes, olive-berries, ears of corn, flowers, &c. were gathered and presented to the Lord, so also was there a feast of harvests, when all was brought in safe out of the field. Now the Lord takes one out of a city and two out of a family, and bringeth them to Zion: he gathers in the first ripe fruits out of every land, and makes him little households in the earth like a flock, and like an handful of corn, and these are the first-born, his chosen, the heirs and joint-heirs with their elder Brother Jesus; but there shall be also a "harvest day, when the nations shall flow to him, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong," and have an innumerable host for his inheritance, and when his seed shall be like the stars of heaven for multitude, and which no man can number, but even through eternity those who in this day of grace came to the Lord and partook of the communion of the saints, shall be for ever blessed in being the first-born.

These are written in heaven, and in their happiness our Saviour would have his disciples rejoice more than in having the devils and evil spirits subject to them, and being able to work miracles and do wonderful works. He says, "Rejoice not in this, but rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven." It was not their gifts that made them children of God, or proved to them the certainty of their salvation; but the Spirit of God who bore witness with their spirits, that they were written down in the Lamb's book of life. This is now our joy who believe in Jesus, we are persuaded our names are graven on our Saviour's hands. He remembers the anguish his body and soul endured, when the iron pens stamped our names there, and this endears us to him

him and him to us. Let our names be here cast out as evil; let them be noted down with heretics, and fools, and mad-men; let our friends, our dear and nearest relations be ashamed to mention our names; let them be a bye-word, and proverb of reproach, for our Saviour and his gospel's sake; let our enemies mock them, and the drunkard and persecutors slander and reproach our names in their songs, and make sport with them; yet will we rejoice and be glad, for they are precious in our Saviour's sight, and honoured more than if written on the breast of Aaron, or borne on the breast-plate of the high-priest; for the nails that tore the hands of the holy child Jesus, engraved with the engraving of a signet our names there, what the church once so heartily prayed for, "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm," we have obtained, and now our High-priest, the Son of God, carries us graven upon his heart, and written upon the palms of his hands. Our names are written in heaven, nor will our loving Lord and Master blot them out of his book of life, but confess them before his Father, and in the presence of the holy angels.

We are come to God the Judge of all. We come guilty criminals, self-condemned, and judged worthy of eternal misery, but we are justified; the Judge of all the earth has quitted us, and now there is no condemnation for us. Who can lay any thing to our charge? "It is God that justifies us: who can condemn us, it is Christ that died for us," and was judged and sentenced to death in our stead, that we might not be judged of the Lord? there was a time when an assize was held in our own breasts, when our sins and guilty conscience cried against us, and we felt the sentence of death in ourselves, the Lord set before us in array and order, all what we had done
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amiss, and wherein we had dealt wickedly; and it was as if his sword was drawn to cut us off, and send us accursed from his presence. O how did our hearts tremble! and every lonely walk and field, every closet and secret chamber were witnesses to our sighs and tears. We did not dare to look up to heaven, but like the publican smote on our breasts, and prayed, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" Have pity upon the chief of sinners! What a sight and sense of sin had we? Our spirits sunk within us, and our hearts ached and failed with dread and fear. We stood like poor malefactors before their judge, and guilty as robbers, thieves and murderers, and waited not knowing if we should not be utterly rejected and banished from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when in this sad estate Jesus undertook for us, he led us to the fountain of his blood, and bid us look upon him and be saved. In his hands we saw our receipts, and in his body beheld all our sins and offences; in the red sea of his blood he washed us, and his bleeding wounds healed us, and on his account, and for his sufferings sake, are we forgiven and pardoned. In this the Judge of all the earth has done right, for Jesus had merited our pardon, paid our debts, cancelled our bonds, broke the engagements, dissolved the old covenant, blotted out the hand-writing that was against us, and nailed it to his cross, and for us suffered the heavy curse and wrath, and endured our chastisement, death and hell. Now can we approach the Judge of all boldly, and call him my Father, and for this grace thank him, who once stood with his hands tied, and in bonds at the bar of Pontius Pilate. He has burst our bands asunder, and cast away our cords, "he has preached deliverance to

the captives," and said, Loose them and let them go. O Jesus! glory be to thee!

We are come to the spirits of just men made perfect, and are complete in our Saviour. We are without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, because his blood has washed away our guilt, and the comeliness which he put upon us, has made us perfect before him. We stand before God happy and blessed in his righteousness, and his holiness makes us all glorious within, our cloathing is of that wrought gold. We taste and enjoy in part, that divine and spiritual happiness those possess above, and are safe in their safety, and sealed to the same redemption, only we are like children toiling in the field, or yet upon our journey, and they have entered the sabbath, and we arrived at the haven where they would be; they are sitting down at the supper of the Lamb, and eating bread and drinking new wine in the kingdom; but we are one man's sons, we are children of the same Father, saved and adopted into the same house and family, and shall surely be one day with them as they are with their Lord.

We are come to Jesus, we have found the Christ, we have ^{found} got the Saviour, the Mediator of the new covenant; he who made peace by the offering up of himself, and who has been our Friend, interceded and prayed for us, and who has made with us a new covenant, having abolished the old, and taken it out of the way because it was against us. He is become our Saviour, our Brother, our Refuge, and has reconciled us to God, and destroyed the enmity which reigned in our hearts, and kept us at a distance from our dear Creator. We have applied in our wretched condition to this loving Mediator, and he has pitied us, stood by us, and obtained eternal life for us. We know the Lamb, we are happily acquainted

acquainted with the Mediator, we have ventured into his presence, and trusted in his name, and have found him gracious and merciful, long-suffering, and of great goodness.

We are come to the blood of sprinkling, which speaks better things than that of Abel. When Cain slew him, his blood justly cried from the ground to heaven for vengeance, but Jesu's blood speaks better things, though we have been his murderers. His blood speaks pardon for us in the throne above, and peace in the earth beneath. When men offered the blood of calves and lambs under the old law, the persons for whom the sacrifices were made were not the better, their consciences remained unpurged, but the blood of Jesus speaks, it reaches the inmost heart, and speaks peace, and love and mercy. It quiets the conscience, and assures us of our being accepted in heaven. It is a witness that our sins are done away. Let the old accuser of the brethren accuse us as he did Job, and let the former sins cry against us, let the beam out of the timber, and the stone out of the walls of the house where we have committed sin, be witness against us; yea, let the broken law and our own conscience cry against us, yet this blood of Jesus out-cries all, and silences the voice of the enemy and the avenger. This blood has already been our bath, and has washed us from all our idols, and from all our filthiness, and speaks for us with almighty prevalence before the throne, and with unspeakable sweetness it speaks within, "Thy sins are forgiven. My peace I give unto thee." Some have foolishly thought to come to the blood of Jesus was a little matter, and the first step in christianity, and have soared and aimed at somewhat greater; but whoever have come indeed to this blood, and know Jesus Christ crucified, he can-

cannot think of higher matters, but resolves to know this alone. This the apostle mentions last, as being the highest and greatest attainment of a christian. This blood cleanseth from all sin, that none can be holier than the soul washed therein. This blood of sprinkling is the antitype of that on the Israelites' door-posts, that preserved them from the destroying angel for a night, but this preserves from all destroyers, and frightens back ten thousand devils. This is better than the blood which the high-priests of the law sprinkled toward heaven seven times, with which they besmeared the people, their own cloaths, and the vessels of the temple, for that made nothing clean, and was only a shadow of this blood, which cleanseth the heart from an evil conscience, and seals to the day of redemption.

This is the river of the fountain of life, whoever drinks of it shall live forever. This is the only brook by the way that can make him that drinks of it lift up his head. It is the wine that makes glad the heart of God and man. It is the only antidote against the poison of sin, the only thing that can quench the raging passions of lust and pride, the only river that can extinguish the wrath and flames of hell. And we are come to this blood of sprinkling, we have found this well of salvation, and here will we dwell. May this wash us daily and momentarily. May this revive and comfort us when we are heavy and afflicted. May this refresh us when we are weary, and besprinkle all our words, thoughts and works, and make our whole behaviour acceptable in the sight of God. May this be seen upon our foreheads living and dying, and ward off the destroyer. May this keep and preserve us clean and white in body and soul, and in all times of danger, or when we do wrong, may this speak for us alone better things than

than the blood of Abel. May it purge away all gloominess, guilt, darkness, and confusion from our hearts, and momentarily speak peace to us. Let as many as have found this precious blood of the Lamb, this almighty blood of God our Saviour, continue in faith, and abide near the wounds and cross of Christ Jesus, and they shall prove all this happiness, and learn from a blessed experience to prize and esteem the blood of sprinkling here, and to praise it everlastingly in the church triumphant hereafter, singing and saying, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive honour and glory, and blessing, for he has loved us and washed us from our sins, and made us kings and priests to God by his blood: to him be thanksgiving and salvation for ever." Amen.

An H Y M N.

- 1 **T**HE name of Christ, how sweet it sounds?
How sweet the mention of his wounds?
For thee, my soul, how dear and good,
Is the bare naming of his blood?
- 2 What makes it precious thus to me
Is, since the Lamb hung on the tree,
His pangs and torments made me well,
Who else had gone to endless hell.
- 3 The law, my conscience and the fiend,
Were witnesses how I had sinn'd;
I stood accus'd, in debt and poor,
When Jesus paid off all my score.
- 4 Nor this alone, but at his death,
His all he would to me bequeath;
I now am made his pleasant son,
And heir to his eternal throne.

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- 5 His dying words are graven deep
Upon my heart, awake or sleep,
This is the blood I shed for thee,
Drink of this cup, and pardon'd be.
- 6 Now ends the ancient covenant,
The wrath, the debt, and fear and want ;
A testament is now of force,
Revoking ev'ry former curse.
- 7 By this I 'scape eternal doom,
And fearless nigh to God I come ;
My Father, to him I may say,
And know he hears whene'er I pray.
- 8 I join the number who are his,
And share their joy, and love and bliss ;
I'm his, and he, the Man divine,
With all his merits now is mine.
- 9 My dear Testator will I bless,
And wearing his pure righteousness,
I boldly shall his judgment meet,
And worship at his bleeding feet.
- 10 No death or judgment hence I dread,
The precious blood my Saviour shed,
The blood of sprinkling speaks for me,
I'm safe ! O Jesus, praise to thee !

Matts 156-157-486

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